

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education

BILL: SB 1550

INTRODUCER: Senator Cruz

SUBJECT: High School Graduation Requirements

DATE: February 10, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Bouck	Sikes	ED	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____

I. Summary:

SB 1550 requires that, beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2021-2022 school year, a student must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to be awarded a standard high school diploma. The bill authorizes a waiver of the requirement if the student or parent declines, in writing, to submit the FAFSA.

The bill has no impact on state revenues or expenditures.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

II. Present Situation:

Standard High School Diploma Requirements

Florida students entering grade 9 in 2019-2020 and thereafter may choose from one of five options to earn a standard diploma.¹ They are:

- The 24-credit program.²
- The 18-credit, Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL) option.³
- The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway option.⁴
- An International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum.⁵

¹ In addition to the five options available for students to earn a standard diploma listed above, Rule 6A-1.09963, F.A.C., outlines two additional options for students with disabilities.

² Section 1003.4282(1)(a), F.S.

³ Section 1002.3105, F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.4282(11), F.S.

⁵ Section 1003.4282(1)(a), F.S.

- An Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) curriculum.⁶

Twenty-four Credit Program

A student must successfully complete 24 credits, with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale,⁷ in the following subject areas:⁸

- Four credits in English Language Arts (ELA) I, II, III, and IV, which includes passing the statewide, standardized grade 10 ELA assessment, or earn a concordant score.
- Four credits in mathematics, including one each in Algebra I and Geometry, which includes passing the statewide, standardized Algebra I EOC assessment, or earn a comparative score.
- Three credits in science, including one credit in Biology I and two credits in equally rigorous courses.⁹
- Three credits in social studies, including one credit in United States (U.S.) History; one credit in World History; one-half credit in economics; and one-half credit in U.S. Government.
- One credit in fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or practical arts that incorporates artistic content and techniques of creativity, interpretation, and imagination.
- One credit in physical education that must include the integration of health.
- Eight credits in electives.

Eighteen Credit Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning Option

Under the ACCEL option, students must complete 15 credits in ELA; mathematics; science; social studies; and fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or practical arts that are also required of students who earn a standard diploma under the 24-credit program. However, students are required to earn only 3 credits in electives, and are not required to earn one credit in physical education.¹⁰ Additionally, similar to the 24-credit option, under the ACCEL option students must earn a cumulative 2.0 GPA.¹¹

18 Credit Career and Technical Education Pathway

To earn a standard high school diploma under the CTE pathway option, a student must earn a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 and:

- Meet the credit requirements in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies established in the 24-credit diploma option.
- Complete two credits in CTE, which must result in a program completion and an industry certification.
- Complete two credits in work-based learning programs, with flexibility authorized for elective credit and credit in financial literacy.

⁶ Section 1003.4282(1)(a), F.S.

⁷ Section 1003.4282(6)(a), F.S.

⁸ Section 1003.4282(3), F.S. One of the 24 credits must be completed through online learning. Section 1003.4282(4), F.S.

⁹ Two of the three required science credits must have a laboratory component. Section 1003.4282(3)(c), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1002.3105(5), F.S.

¹¹ Sections 1002.3105(5) and 1003.4282(6)(a), F.S.

Advanced International Certificate of Education Curriculum

The AICE curriculum requires a student to achieve a minimum of seven credits in the Cambridge International AS Level Global Perspectives & Research and in the following subject groups:¹²

- Group 1: Mathematics and Sciences.
- Group 2: Languages.
- Group 3: Arts and Humanities.
- Group 4: Interdisciplinary subjects (optional).

International Baccalaureate Curriculum

The IB Diploma Programme (DP) is a two-year program made up of the DP core, which includes a Theory of Knowledge course, an extended essay, and a service project, and six courses from the following subject groups:¹³

- Studies in Language and Literature.
- Language Acquisition.
- Individuals and Societies.
- Sciences.
- Mathematics.
- The Arts.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

To apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, work-study, and loans, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition, many states and colleges use FAFSA information to determine eligibility for state and school aid, and some private financial aid providers may use FAFSA information to determine eligibility for aid.¹⁴

According to the National College Access Network, completion of the FAFSA is one of the best predictors of whether a high school senior will go on to college, as seniors who complete the FAFSA are 84 percent more likely to immediately enroll in postsecondary education. For students in the lowest socioeconomic quintile, FAFSA completion is associated with a 127 percent increase in immediate college enrollment.¹⁵

But while the FAFSA is required to determine eligibility for federal student aid, including Pell Grants, low-cost student loans and federal work-study programs, in 2018 only 60.9 percent of high school graduates completed the FAFSA.¹⁶

¹² Cambridge Assessment International Education, *Cambridge AICE Diploma Curriculum*, <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-advanced/cambridge-aice-diploma/curriculum/> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

¹³ International Baccalaureate, *Curriculum*, <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

¹⁴ United States Department of Education—Federal Student Aid, *What is the FAFSA?*, <https://studentaid.gov/help/fafsa> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

¹⁵ National College Access Network, *National FAFSA Completion Rates for High School Seniors and Graduates*, <https://collegeaccess.org/page/NationalFAFSACompletionRatesforHighSchoolSeniorsandGraduates> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

¹⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, *States Looking at Ways to Promote FAFSA Completion*, <https://www.ncsl.org/blog/2019/12/10/states-looking-at-ways-to-promote-fafsa-completion.aspx> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

A national study indicates a variety of reasons why students do not fill out the FAFSA, which include the perception that they may not qualify for or need financial aid, the perception that the forms and application process are too burdensome, and concerns about debt.¹⁷ Low FAFSA completion rates have a serious financial impact on students. Research suggests that millions of students who may otherwise qualify for federal financial aid do not complete the FAFSA, and forgo billions in potential financial aid.¹⁸

Recognizing that completion of the FAFSA is an important step to postsecondary attainment, the 2019 Legislature established the SAIL to 60 Initiative,¹⁹ a component of which seeks to increase the number of high school seniors who submit a completed FAFSA to receive financial aid to help pay for their postsecondary education expenses.

Three states have enacted laws that require FAFSA completion for high school graduation. The Illinois law goes into effect during the 2020-21 academic year, Louisiana's law has been in effect since 2017-2018, and Texas's law is effective for the 2021-2022 academic year. All such policies authorize students to receive waivers for the graduation requirement, including documentation that the student chooses not to participate, or by completion of a state financial aid form.²⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill modifies the high school graduation requirements in s. 1003.4282, F.S., to require that, beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2021-2022 school year, a student must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to be awarded a standard high school diploma. The bill specifies, however, that a student meets the requirement to submit the FAFSA

For the class of 2018, 60.9 percent of graduates completed the FAFSA by June 29; among 2017 graduates, 60.6 percent had completed the form by June 30 of that year. The Hechinger Report, *Are too few college students asking for federal aid?* (July 20, 2018), <https://hechingerreport.org/are-too-few-college-students-asking-for-federal-aid/> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

¹⁷ United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Why Didn't Students Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)? A Detailed Look* (Dec. 2018), available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018061.pdf>. Many respondents who did not apply also reported a lack of knowledge about federal financial aid eligibility criteria, erroneously believing they were ineligible because of low test scores, low credit scores, or that they would attend school part time. *Id.*

¹⁸ United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Submissions* (Aug. 2018), available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018418.pdf>, at 1. Kantowitz, Mark, *Analysis of Why Some Students Do Not Apply for Financial Aid* (Apr. 27, 2009), available at <https://www.finaid.org/educators/20090427CharacteristicsOfNonApplicants.pdf>, at 1. National College Access Network, *Why Invest in Increasing FAFSA Completion?*, <https://collegeaccess.org/page/WhyInvestFAFSA> (last visited Feb. 5, 2020). Kofoed, Michael, *To Apply or Not to Apply: FAFSA Completion and Financial Aid Gaps* (Feb. 12, 2014), available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2353846>. The Brookings Institution, *FAFSA completion rates matter: But mind the data* (July 5, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/fafsa-completion-rates-matter-but-mind-the-data/> (last visited Feb. 5, 2020). Judith Scott-Clayton, *The Role of Financial Aid in Promoting College Access and Success: Research Evidence and Proposals for Reform*, Journal of Student Financial Aid: Vol. 45: Iss. 3, Article 3, available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f173/40d5bcc6531bad35794b85469180347278f.pdf>.

¹⁹ Section 17, ch. 2019-119, L.O.F., codified as s. 1004.013, F.S. The Strengthening Alignment between Industry and Learning (SAIL) to 60 Initiative was created to increase to 60 percent the percentage of working-age adults in this state with a high-value postsecondary certificate, degree, or training experience by 2030.

²⁰ National College Access Network, *Illinois Becomes Third State to Require FAFSA Completion for High School Graduation* (Aug. 12, 2019), <https://collegeaccess.org/news/465183/Illinois-Becomes-Third-State-to-Require-FAFSA-Completion-for-High-School-Graduation.htm> (last visited Feb. 4, 2020).

if the student's parent²¹ or the student, if such student is 18 years of age or older, submits a letter to the school district declining to submit the FAFSA.

The bill also modifies s. 1002.3105, F.S., regarding the ACCEL diploma option, and s. 1003.5716, F.S., regarding high school diploma expectations for a student with a disability, to conform cross references to the changes made in s. 1003.4282, F.S.

Requiring students to complete the FAFSA may increase the need for financial aid resources and supports in each school district. Each school district and school may need to establish additional monitoring processes to track student completion of the FAFSA.²² In addition, students and families who wish to participate may require assistance to fill out the FAFSA.

The requirement for students to complete the FAFSA prior to the award of a high school diploma may increase the number of students who are eligible for federal financial aid and for Florida or other state's need-based grants, depending on the chosen postsecondary institution.²³ The requirement may also encourage more students to pursue postsecondary education if they believe that they will have adequate financial resources. However, the effect will not be realized for several years, as the requirement applies only to students entering grade 9 in the 2021-2022 school year.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

²¹ "Parent" is either or both parents of a student, any guardian of a student, any person in a parental relationship to a student, or any person exercising supervisory authority over a student in place of the parent. Section 1000.21(5), F.S.

²² The *FAFSA Completion Tool* provides high schools with current data about their FAFSA submissions and completions, but lists only numbers of submitted and completed FAFSA forms; no personally identifiable information for any FAFSA filer is shared through the tool. United States Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, *Questions and Answers About FAFSA Completion Data*, <https://studentaid.gov/data-center/student/application-volume/faq#years-data-available> (last visited Feb. 6, 2020). In order to access student-level data, each school district may be required to establish an agreement with the Florida Department of Education, which is responsible for receiving such data, and will have to have the technical infrastructure in place to receive student-level data. United States Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, *Find FAFSA completion data about your high school*, <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/learn/fafsa/completion.jsp> (last visited Feb. 6, 2020).

²³ Florida need-based grant programs that require an applicant to, among other requirements, submit the FAFSA are the Road-to-Independence Program under s. 409.1451, F.S.; the First Generation Matching Grant Program under s. 1009.701, F.S.; and the Florida Work Experience Program under s. 1009.77, F.S.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid may qualify for and receive federal financial aid and state need-based grants, which may make a postsecondary education more affordable for these students.

C. Government Sector Impact:

More student may qualify for need-based programs that require submission of the FAFSA, which may require additional funds to provide aid under such programs.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The requirement in the bill for students to complete the FAFSA in order to earn a standard high school diploma may not apply to students who earn a high school diploma through the Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL) option.

Section 1003.4282(6), F.S., specifies that a student who meets the required grade point average (GPA) and meets the requirements specified in that section must be awarded a standard high school diploma. The bill adds the FAFSA requirement to s. 1003.4282, F.S., which would include in the requirement those options established in that section—the 24 credit option, International Baccalaureate or Advanced International Certificate of Education curricula, and the Career and Technical Education Pathway.

Under the ACCEL option established in s. 1002.3105, F.S., a student with a GPA of at least 2.0 who meets the academic requirements of the 24-credit option (except for physical education), and completes three elective credits must be awarded a standard high school diploma. The bill does not include in s. 1002.3105, F.S., a requirement to complete the FAFSA. The requirement to complete the FAFSA should be added to the ACCEL requirements in s. 1002.3105(5), F.S.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1003.4282, 1002.3105, and 1003.5716.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
